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Songhees Park Opening Celebrates Unique Partnership with City and Songhees Nation

VICTORIA, BC — The newly expanded Songhees Park has opened along the Inner Harbour, becoming the first park developed in partnership between the City of Victoria and the Songhees Nation. The new park area connects people with Lekwungen art and culture and offers places to relax, gather and connect with nature.

“This spectacular waterfront park increases the visibility of Lekwungen identity and honours the homelands of the Lekwungen people,” said Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. “Through the collaborative design of this important site, we are taking further steps on the path of reconciliation and our shared future. We deeply appreciate the time that the Lekwungen language team has put into this project.”

The new park area is located at the site of the former Songhees Village and Reserve until 1911. The Songhees Nation identified priorities for the park, including the importance of environmental revitalization and stewardship, the expression of Lekwungen identity and culture, and the education of visitors about the Lekwungen.

“Songhees Nation is pleased to be working with the City of Victoria on the expansion of Songhees Park as another step toward reconciliation,” said Chief Ron Sam. “Not only will the initiative provide a culturally safe and supportive sanctuary for the Lekwungen community, it will also raise awareness of our Nation's identity by reclaiming our historically significant spaces. This expansion will continue to serve our community and provide a safe environment in which our people are valued, respected and cared for. Every step towards reconciliation in our city is vital, and today's announcement will help push this process forward. We thank Mayor Helps and Council for their work on this important initiative.”

New seating walls in the park feature a Lekwungen canoe paddle design created by the City's Indigenous Artist-in-Residence, Dylan Thomas, working in collaboration with representatives of the Songhees Nation. Coordination between the City and the Songhees Nation will continue over the coming year to create additional artwork and an interactive educational program for park visitors to enjoy.

The 0.76 ha (1.8 acre) expansion increases the size of the existing park by 25 per cent and transforms a former roadway into a hillside greenspace, consisting of a Garry oak maritime meadow and coastal bluff gardens, accessible pathways, elegant lighting, extensive seating and gathering spaces. A new timber viewing platform offers dynamic views of the Inner Harbour. The park also includes 55 new trees and 55 species of indigenous plants that will provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

Songhees Park is a key connection point in Victoria's active transportation network, linking the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, the E&N Rail Trail, the Songhees Walkway and the Johnson Street Bridge.

The \$3-million project has been completed on budget.

ATTACHMENT: Photo of the opening ceremony on Monday for the newly expanded Songhees Park, which is the first park developed in partnership between the City of Victoria and the Songhees Nation.

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